THE LETTER-CARRIER.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYES IN CLOSEST TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE.

THEIR REMARKABLE ORGANIZATION TO HAVE A CONVENTION THIS WEEK—JOHN N. PARSONS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE.

In the grand army of Government employes none are in closer touch with the people than the 13,000 men who deliver the mail. Not only in the business houses but in the homes throughout the land the coming of the postman is looked for at certain hours every day, and though he remains to the majority of those whom he serves only "the postman," with no personality, his failure to appear at the regular time would cause a howl of complaint. But he does not fail to appear. The weather and the seasons are not allowed to interfere with him, and while other messengers whose duties bring them to offices and homes are excused for an occasional lapse of duty, there is never an excuse for the postman.

"We are even taken to task for not furnishing letters," said one of the gray-uniformed force, "and many a time I have been called 'mean' because I failed to bring the letter which probably never came."

But there is another side to the picture. People learn to know their letter-carrier, and children along the route know the man who brings letters "from papa" or from other members of the family, and although they have only the address from

JOHN N. PARSONS.

which to draw conclusions, many a family secret becomes known to the letter man.

"Hand those square letters to me on the quiet," is the instruction given by some young man to the carrier, and when they finally cease to come and the young man is absent from his desk or counter for a short time, the letter-carrier knows full well that another contract for better or for worse has been made.

THEIR EXPERIENCES NOT ALL HAPPY.

"The carriers' stories do not all end so happily, though," said a veteran in the service. "I remember bringing letters to a house for about two years. They were all addressed in the same hand, always the same envelope. The postmark was a Western health resort. A motherly woman with anxiety written in her face was always at the door when I brought the letters, and she seemed pleased with them even before they were read. One day a letter came from the same place in the same kind of envelope, but with the address in another hand. Then there was no letter for a week and then one came which was also in a hand that was strange to me. Next time I saw the old lady she was dressed in black, and her face would have told the story even if she had not stopped me to say that her poor boy had passed away, and she was so thankful to me for having brought all her letters. I didn't know the son, but can you wonder that I was interested?"

"Every sixty days I brought a letter to a house on the East Side," said an observing carrier, "and its postmark and the regularity with which the letters came gave me pretty good reason to believe that the writer was not away for his health, on business or on pleasure. I was sure that he had one of those steady jobs which most people object to because they are so confining. One day I passed the house, never thinking of the sixty-day letter, when a little lad ran up to me and said: 'Say, you needn't come round any more; Mike's out.'"

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

The letter-carriers, although they play an important part, have been looked upon as the privates in the service, but through their own efforts they have advanced to a higher level. The National Association of Letter-Carriers was organized at Milwaukee in 1889, and has grown steadily since then, and at the present time about 10,500 of the 13,000 carriers are members of the organization. Before the formation of the National Association the carriers had benefit societies and social organizations, but there was no arrangement for concerted action and no method by which carriers as bodies could communicate with one another. But even in their disjointed way the letter-carriers' societies had considerable influence, and the passage of the eight-hour law in 1888 was the result of the labors of the various societies with the New-York Society in the lead. The statue to S. S. Cox was erected by the letter-carriers to show their appreciation of his services in their behalf at that time.

The organization of the carriers was at once recognized as a step in the right direction, and the postal clerks and the railway mail employes soon followed the example. In forming the association the carriers did not act in a spirit of opposition to their superiors. "On the contrary," a member explained, "it was our aim to co-operate with the higher authorities, and the association never harbored any spirit of antagonism."

In proof of this statement the fact was mentioned that at the last National convention in Philadelphia Postmaster-General Wilson was present and made the opening address, and said that he heartily indorsed and approved the aims and objects of the association. At that session A. W. Machen, superintendent of the free delivery system, also spoke, and approved of the organization's work.

AIMS OF THE ORGANIZATION.

The aims of the association are: To better their tenure of office, especially in such postoffices as those in which the Civil Service laws did not apply.

"There is an office in this country," said a carrier, "where men were discharged right and left on trivial, trumped-up charges. Everybody knew that the men were put out simply because of their political opinions, and the fact that one of them became a valuable member of a newspaper staff showed that there must have been prejudice, to say the least. To guard against such abuses is one of the objects of the association. We want also to extend the Civil Service rules to all postoffices, and not except the smaller ones. We believe that no man should be discharged without cause or before he has had a chance to answer charges. That part of our wishes," he added, "is now in force, but we want an act of Congress to clinch it, because if Bryan should be elected, and if he should name General Coxey as Postmaster-General, where would we be at?"

The letter-carrier, being human, wants an increase of salary. At present a substitute receives a salary of $1 a year and the pay of the carrier whose work he does. If the "sub" is lucky he may make $400 a year, and although he always receives the regular pay of the carrier whose work he does, there is no case on record where he received the $1 provided for by law.

After the carrier has been regularly appointed he receives $600 the first year, $800 the second year, and $1,000 a year after that. In towns of less than 75,000 inhabitants the highest salary is $850.

RETIREMENT AFTER LONG SERVICE.

The association also favors legislation looking to a law by which carriers may be retired after a certain number of years of faithful service. To illustrate the justice of this movement the case of Charles A. Tyler was cited. He is the oldest carrier in the service, and is now an employe at the Produce Exchange branch of the New-York Postoffice. He carried letters in olden times when the letter-carrier received a penny for the letter which he delivered, and he became a member of the force when the free delivery service was organized in New-York. Despite his long service, he is hopelessly a letter-carrier with no chance for promotion or pension. The only man who disputed seniority with Tyler was Moses Church, of Worcester, Mass., who died within a year, and whose son is serving in the Worcester office at present.

The association has also directed its attention to the special agent system which was instituted about a year ago. The duty of the special agents was to watch carriers and report those to headquarters at Washington who were in any way derelict in the discharge of their duties. The men went to the various cities, and in the garb of private citizens, and unknown to the postmaster or any postoffice official, lay in wait for the unsuspecting carrier. If one was seen talking on the street or loitering for a moment beyond the allowed time, his name was sent to the Washington office and his attention called to the lapse of duty. But this notice from Washington rarely came within sixty days, and so much time had elapsed that the man was placed at a disadvantage because in most instances the circumstances referred to by the "informer" had been forgotten. The carriers did not object to being watched, but they wanted the Government to employ men who were in the classified service for that purpose, and not outsiders. No appropriation was made to continue the service last year, to the great satisfaction of the association.

In speaking of the charges which were brought by these informers, an employe said that there was a humorous as well as a serious side to the matter. He cited a case where a Chicago carrier had been reported for going into an apartment-house and remaining there for hours. On investigation it was found that the carrier did enter the apartment-house on the date named, but that he left it five minutes later by a rear door, while the special agent sat watching the door at which he entered. In the city of New-York carriers were reported for spending too much time at the Governor's Island and Ellis Island ferry-houses, when really they were only waiting for the boat. It is said to the credit of the New-York office that with all the special machinery at work only fifteen men were reported, while in Chicago 175 names were sent in during the same space of time.

GOOD WORK IN THE NEW-YORK OFFICE.

"This good showing," said a carrier, "was undoubtedly due to the admirable organization in the New-York office, which encourages a spirit of faithfulness to the postal service. The president of the New-York organization is John N. Parsons, who has been in the service about eight years, and whose administration of the affairs of our body, about 1,400 strong, shows him to be a man of more than ordinary executive ability. Mr. Parsons is about forty years old, and comes from good stock, his father having been secretary to Charles O'Conor. He is a mechanic, and as a practical workman he knows the wants and requirements of men who work. His worth as an organizer and as a leader was recognized by Postmaster Dayton, who offered to make him the superintendent of a postal station at a salary of $2,000 a year; but he refused the place in order that he might keep his present position because he thought that he could be of more service to his fellow-carriers.

"Some time ago," he added, "the carriers organized a movement to give Mr. Parsons some tangible evidence of their appreciation. We made up a purse of $1,000, which, together with a set of resolutions, was given to him. No man was allowed to give more than $1. Many a man, knowing what he had done for the cause, would have been willing to give more."

The enthusiastic carrier did not tell what was learned afterward, that an outsider offered to make a substantial contribution to the Parsons purse, but that the offer was declined by the carriers. The president of the association sets his men an admirable example by his temperate habits, and the consequence is that the principal officers of the New-York organization are total abstainers.

The seventh annual convention of the National Association of Letter-Carriers will be opened at Grand Rapids, Mich., to-morrow, and will probably not adjourn until September 11. It is expected that Mr. Parsons will be elected to the presidency of the National Association.

ADJUDICATING OVERTIME CLAIMS.

Carriers here and all over the country are interested in the proceedings of the commission of the Court of Claims now in session in New-York for the purpose of adjudicating the remainder of the overtime claims of carriers arising out of the eight-hour law of 1888. This law provided that if a carrier worked more than eight hours a day he was to receive extra pay. The Postoffice Department at that time decided that eight hours a day meant fifty-six hours a week or eight hours seven days in the week. The association contested this construction of the law and employed counsel and took a test case to the United States Court of Claims, where a decision was rendered in their favor, and at the personal request of the Postmaster-General the case was carried to the United States Supreme Court, where the decision of the lower court was sustained. As a result of these decisions, commissioners of claims have sat in cities throughout the country for the last two years hearing claims and deciding on the amounts due to letter-carriers for overtime. The carriers of New-York have already received $215,000, and before the cases are closed the amount will probably reach $500,000.

In speaking of some of the unknown work which letter-carriers have, one who has grown old in the service said: "Most people believe that a letter-carrier has nothing to do but to deliver letters. Assorting, arranging and looking over improperly addressed matter really takes more than half our time; and speaking of improperly addressed matter," he added, "this stuff is the bane of the letter-carrier's life. In England, where a letter-carrier takes out a letter and cannot deliver it, he returns it to the office and is done with it. Here we have to look and search and try again, and nothing is left undone to find the owner. In different offices the mail matter while it is in this condition has different names. Here we call it 'beats,' in Newark this matter is called 'deads,' in Cincinnati 'junk,' in Boston 'slop,' and nearly every place has its own name for it."

It was also said that in England if a letter-carrier's pouch weighed more than thirty-five pounds an auxiliary carrier was sent along, while here it was nothing unusual for a man to leave the office with 75 or 100 pounds of mail matter. Among the peculiar phrases used in postoffices by carriers the "dog letter" was spoken of. It appears that a postal regulation permits a carrier to bring back to the office a letter addressed to a house where there is a vicious dog. The carrier need not deliver the letter, and in explanation for the non-delivery he marks it 'dog.' People who live in remote parts of a city who get letters in the morning which should have been delivered the evening before, may find the word "dog" written on them, and they will know that the imaginary dog was used as an excuse for non-delivery on time.

NEW POEMS BY BURNS.

From Black and White.

The second volume of the "Centenary Burns," edited by William Ernest Henley and Thomas F. Henderson, and published by T. C. & E. C. Jack, of Edinburgh, which is beyond doubt the definitive edition of the Scots poet, contains the "Posthumous Pieces." Since these include "The Jolly Beggars," "The Twa Herds," "Holy Willie's Prayer" and other verses of the first water, it is needless to say that this is one of the most important of the set. The editors, who have had exceptional facilities afforded them in their great work, are able to give several poems hitherto unpublished from the original manuscripts. One of these entitled "The Cares o' Love," may be quoted:

He: The cares o' Love are sweeter far
Than onie other pleasure;
And if sae dear its sorrows are,
Enjoyment, what a treasure!

She: I fear to try, I dare na try
A passion sae ensnaring;
For light's her heart and blythe's her song
That for nae man is caring.

Probably there is not much to recall Burns at his highest either in the song or in any other of the pieces that appear in this volume for the first time. Still every one of them possesses a certain value—indeed, it were hard to imagine anything from his pen so utterly common place as to be unworthy of preservation—and so the presence of this new matter lends a fresh attraction to the edition.

MR. CECIL RHODES AND THE MATABELES.

From The Saturday Review.

It is the dramatic instinct which makes men popular idols. All the world's a stage, and Mr. Rhodes was quite alive to the theatrical effect of sauntering into the Matabele headquarters in a tweed suit to have it out with the Indunas. Not that this detracts in any way from the personal courage of the stroke; it adds to it; but it illustrates the great power of simplicity in dealing with complicated situations. The Matabele must have grievances, said Mr. Rhodes; the simplest plan will be to go and talk things over with the chiefs. And of course the Matabele had grievances. They complained of the native police—whether sincerely does not matter, as this force, admittedly a failure, has been abolished. They complained of the conduct of two prominent officials of the Chartered Company, a native commissioner and another. Who they are doesn't matter either, as they have been removed. But we trust the lesson will not be lost on Mr. Rhodes and Lord Grey that, if there is to be anything like continuous peace in Rhodesia, the natives must be treated like human beings.

"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn."

We know from the unpleasant revelations that are made periodically that Englishmen, in dealing with inferior races under hot suns, are frequently brutal. The Chartered Company, if it is to keep its charter, must look to it that the old Dutch doctrine about whacking one's "boy" is tempered by modern notions of humanity. Perhaps, too, a little more care might be exercised in the selection of their officials by the company. It would not be a bad thing if all appointments had to be made by the Secretary of State, or, at any rate, subject to his approval.

FRENCH TRACTION SYSTEMS.

ELECTRICITY POPULAR AS A MOTIVE POWER.

THE USE OF COMPRESSED AIR—A TALK WITH M. B. ABDANK, A CONSTRUCTING ENGINEER OF PARIS.

M. B. Abdank, long a resident of Paris, and for fifteen or sixteen years consulting and constructing engineer for numerous street railway companies in France, has been spending a week or two in this city, but sails for home in a few days. He has had a good deal of experience with various systems of traction, and for this reason a Tribune reporter hunted him up yesterday at the Broadway Central Hotel, and tried to get him to talk on the subject. The moment was opportune, and the Frenchman complied gracefully. He has a good command of English, and spoke with a directness indicative of clear conviction.

"In Lyons, which is the second largest city in France," he said, "nearly every imaginable means of propelling streetcars has been tried in the last few years. Steam was used on two roads there, but it has already been abandoned on one of these, and will be on the other within a few months. Compressed air was also employed. This, however, has been given up entirely. Electricity is now the general favorite, and in less than a year will be the exclusive motive power on street railways in Lyons. In the greater part of the city the overhead trolley wire will be tolerated, but it may be necessary to resort to conduits in the central district."

"Is the French trolley system the same as the American?"

"Yes, substantially. But French taste exacts better construction than you permit in this country. Our poles are more ornamented, are always erect and give promise of remaining in service longer."

"Has the electric system been introduced into other cities?"

"Certainly. Havre and beautiful old Rouen now have trolley-cars in their streets, and it will not be long before we see them in many other large French towns. In Havre electricity is used exclusively now."

"How about Paris?"

ELECTRICITY FOR TRACTION IN PARIS.

"There is now an excellent prospect for the adoption of the same system there. All local transportation at the French capital, except in cabs, is under the control of one corporation, the Compagnie Generale des Omnibuses. This monopoly pursued a very conservative course for a long time, and relied almost exclusively upon horse power for moving its vehicles. But during the last two years a more progressive policy has been adopted. Experiments have been conducted with various other agents, among them the electric storage battery, the compressed air motor and the Serpollet steam engine. Two lines were operated with compressed air and three by steam. Within the last six months, as the result of these tests and of the success of the trolley in Lyons and elsewhere, the Compagnie Generale des Omnibuses has decided to equip all of its car lines with electrical apparatus. The particular type to be adopted will be determined later. The company's chief engineer, M. Mommerque, has been instructed to make a careful estimate of the cost of transforming the various car lines so as to adapt them to the use of electricity, and proposals have been invited from manufacturers of electrical apparatus, indicating the terms on which they would undertake the task. This competition will be open within a few weeks."

"Is it not strange that Paris has waited so long before taking such action?"

"No. You must consider three things. First, Europe generally has been behind America in the adoption of the trolley system, and France has not been more sluggish than England and Germany. Secondly, as the storage battery is really a French idea, it is natural that Frenchmen should at first give it the preference to any other electric system. Thirdly, the exclusive privileges now enjoyed by the Compagnie Generale des Omnibuses will expire in about twelve years. It has naturally hesitated to make any new and heavy investment without some assurance that at the expiration of its franchise the municipal authorities would take the property off the company's hands. It is now hoped that this can be arranged on the 'instalment plan.' However, the International Fair of 1900 will force upon the company the necessity of providing better means of transportation than horse power, and preparations for the change are not being made any too soon."

"What have you found to be the most serious rival of electricity for traction purposes in France?"

THE USE OF COMPRESSED AIR.

"Compressed air. The use of this agent originated, I think, in my country, and dates from about 1889. One of its first applications was in Nancy, where several miles of road were operated by that means. Later it was introduced at Nogent, near Paris, and has been in use there for about ten years. An attempt was also made to operate a line with compressed air motors from Paris to Versailles, a distance of thirteen miles. While the system was fairly successful for short roads, though, it did not prove equal to the requirements of longer ones. Consequently, cars were run with compressed air out only as far as Saint Cloud, which is about half way to Versailles. It was hoped that cars could be run for sixteen miles without replenishing the compressed air tanks. But the frequent stoppages en route and the greater expenditure of power required to start than to maintain speed afterward reduced the distance to about six."

"What means of traction are employed in Versailles itself?"

"Until recently both electricity and compressed air were in use, but the latter will be abandoned at the close of the current month."

"From your own experience and observation what would you say is the chief advantage of electricity over compressed air for running streetcars?"

"Economy."

"Are you thinking of the cost of developing power at a central station or the use of it on the cars themselves?"

"On the cars. Perhaps the machinery for compressing air may be more expensive than that required to generate electricity. But the chief difference is in the operation of the road."

"Do you mean that an air motor wastes more power than an electric motor?"

"No. I refer to the increased cost of repairs. You see, an electric motor has only one movable part, the armature, and that rotates. An air motor is an engine, very much like the steam engine, and it is composed of at least fifty or sixty movable parts. Moreover, the motion is reciprocating, not rotary. If you could get a perfect rotary engine it would be different. As it is, something is likely to work loose or break. We have found in France that we can run a car for 17 centimes per kilometre, and that it costs from 31 to 34 centimes for compressed air. (To get the cost per mile you must multiply these figures by 1.6.) The latter system can be made to work, no doubt, but our stockholders cannot make any money out of it."

"Have you examined the air motors now in use in this city? Do they not differ somewhat from those with which you are familiar?"

"I have not looked at your American air motors. It was the Mekarskie system which we used. Pressures of fifty atmospheres, or about 750 pounds to the square inch, were employed. If, as I am told, you carry 2,000 pounds, you increase the danger from explosion. What risks you Americans are willing to run! Nothing like that would be tolerated in France. Even with our low pressures we occasionally have accidents. There have been explosions of tubes, especially at the point where a connection was being made between the supply pipe and the tank of the car, and men have been badly injured thereby. There may be improvements in details like the valves or in reheating. But none of them, I fear, will meet the chief objection which I have raised to the whole system."

"How about the advantage of having each car supplied with its own motive power entirely independent of every other?"

"Under some circumstances that counts for something; under others, it is of secondary importance. On lines running out into thinly populated districts, where the trips and stops are infrequent, the 'automobile' plan is a good one. But in a large and crowded city, where the number of cars is great, and they are run close together, the plan of supplying power from a central station by wire, instead of carrying power stored, is vastly preferable in my judgment."

"You have already referred to accidents occurring where compressed air was used. You do not consider electricity a dangerous element, then?"

"No, not on trolley roads, where voltages of only 500 or 600 are used. It is a very different matter with the high potential currents required for arc lighting. In Lyons, before introducing electricity, we tried a lot of experiments to ascertain the degree of risk attending it. These satisfied us that, while a man might receive an uncomfortable shock, he could not be killed by a trolley current. In my judgment, the only objection to the trolley system is purely aesthetic. It is merely a question of good looks."

"What was the chief drawback to the use of steam on street railways in France?"

"The weight of the machinery. We can make a noiseless, smoke-consuming engine, which will not prove a nuisance nor frighten horses. But we cannot make as light a carriage with such an equipment. There is too much dead weight per passenger."

INDIAN BASKETS.

AN ABSORBING AND EXPENSIVE CRAZE.

THE ART WILL SOON BE A LOST ONE—A SMALL COLLECTION WORTH $4,000.

J. Torrey Connor in The Land of Sunshine.

As with the gathering of postage stamps, blue china, book plates and similar bric-a-brac, the collecting of Indian baskets leads to depletion of one's purse, and a not infrequent transgression of the tenth commandment. A collector, commonly styled a "crank" by the unsympathetic, but known among the faithful as an "enthusiast," may not be of the elect unless backed by a collection numbering at least half a hundred fine specimens of basketry. This means an outlay of from $10 to $200 per basket—although, if purchased from the makers direct, the cost is much less. An Indian woman would sometimes sell a basket which represented the labor of weeks for a few dollars. I put it in the past tense advisedly, not wishing to kindle false hopes. Before collecting became epidemic, there was always the chance of picking up a real "find" in some out-of-the-way spot; but the curio dealer

A BASKET FOR STORING WHEAT.

has cornered about everything that has escaped the prowling collector, and nowadays you bargain for your basket over a counter. A student of basketry will tell you, and rightly, that the value of a collection is enhanced four-fold if the baskets are authentic—that is, if they have been a long time in use, and were secured at first hand. In the famous Jewett collection all the baskets have seen service, and the greater part of them have that beautiful, old, mellow tint that no newly woven specimen of the textile art can boast. Mrs. Jewett has refused $4,000 for these unique decorations of her boudoir.

The 150 baskets are the work of twenty-eight different Indian tribes, the best work being done by the Modoc, the Tulare and the Chocot Indians—the Modoc basket leading, with the Tulare a close second.

Among them is a three-generation basket which can claim to be at least one hundred years old, since the Indian woman of whom it was purchased, grand-daughter of the weaver, was nearly ninety. It was no simple matter to secure this heirloom, for the sentiment an Indian has in her uncommunicative makeup finds expression in the hoarding of these relics of her own or her foremother's skill. But the collector who is wise in his generation does not easily accept defeat, and after prolonged negotiations a change of ownership is generally effected.

With infinite care and patience the Indian woman weaves the flexible twigs of trees, or the stems of reeds and the long grass stalks into a shape so perfect that you wonder at the beauty of it; counting her stitches so carefully that seldom does the decorative pattern fail to join properly. There are, practically, but two kinds of weaving, the horizontal and the upright. Being athirst for information, I unravelled a basket to a depth of a quarter of an inch, that I might thereby get at the ground plan and specifications, so to speak. The weaving was horizontal. The grass strands, four or five in number, used as "filling," were bunched and carried round and round, row on row, being reinforced by the insertion of grasses running lengthwise of the basket. Beginning at the bottom of the basket, I noted how all the loose ends were neatly concealed by the "stitch," or coil; this was carried over and under the horizontal strands, each stitch being dovetailed to the lower row of stitches, thus binding the whole firmly together.

The Eel River Indians weave the double coil, the stitch passing over two strands instead of one. It is identical with the Japanese weaving.

It is easier for the weaver to widen the basket to a bowl shape than to draw it in, bottle shape. The first is accomplished by widening the stitch, as in crotchet work, while the narrowing is done by splitting the stitch.

Four stitches, or coils, to the inch is coarse weaving; fifteen stitches to the inch is reckoned fine; and a specimen containing fifty-three stitches to the inch, in the Campbell collection, is the finest weaving known. No two baskets are ever made just alike, and yet oftentimes there is a similarity of pattern. This is not to be wondered at when it is known that every weaver takes as a guide the patterns drawn by Dame Nature. You can trace the lightning's zig-zag flash on this basket, on that a design resembling the markings of the diamond-back rattlesnake. Figures of animals—deer and bear—are sometimes copied, and also the figures of men.

Baskets range in size all the way from the trinket basket, no bigger than your fist, beaded and feathered gorgeously, to the immense receptacle for the storing of grain, with a capacity of half a ton, and vary as much in shape as in size. There is the prettily woven nest for the pappoose; the large, plaque-shaped basket on which the Indians gamble with dice made of walnut shells, halved, filled with brea (tar) into which wampum is pressed; the queer, conical basket in which burdens are borne upon the back; the caps, worn to protect the head in carrying burdens; the bottle-neck basket, beloved of connoisseurs; the bottomless basket, which fits over a hollowed stone, into which corn is poured and ground with a pestle; baskets that serve as wardrobes; "pitched" baskets, in which water is carried; deep, bowl-shaped baskets, in which water is heated for cooking by the throwing in of hot stones; grain sifters, tobacco pouches, and so on.

The coarser baskets, those for rough service, are made of split twigs for greater strength. The colors most used in "filling in" for the pattern are black, brown or red. To obtain black, the weaver soaks the stems in guano; other colors, in the old baskets, are purely vegetable.

The interweaving of feathers and beads with the grasses is comparatively recent. The "Sun Worshippers' basket" shows three kinds of feathers employed in decoration—those of the teal duck, the wild canary and the red feathers of the woodpecker. It is further ornamented with rows of wampum and wampum pendants, three grades of shell "money" being used. Frequently the feathers that grow on the heads of quail are to be found on feather baskets used in connection with the tiny red feathers from the head of the woodpecker. A number of birds must of necessity be slaughtered to furnish the covering for even a small basket, and on a basket of medium size I counted one hundred "tufts," representing just that number of quail.

How the weaver managed to catch the end of the minute feather under the stitch, fastening it firmly in place; how she wove a basket alike on both sides, inside and out, with never a loose end to give a clew to the secret; how she fashioned the tiny beads of shell; above all, how she could attain such perfection in her weaving with nothing save a rude bone needle to aid the labor of her hands—these are a few of the things that have not yet been found out.

The Modoc Indian wove the finest basket, but the collector who has not already secured one of these treasures will doubtless be obliged to content himself with a Tulare basket—and thank his lucky stars if he can get that. Really to appreciate a California basket, one has but to contrast it with the work of the Indians of Arizona and New-Mexico. It is like placing a dish of delicate porcelain beside one of common delf.

Time was when the Indian brave chose his wife for her skill in basket-weaving; it was, so to speak, her dowry. But the art that was handed down from mother to child for centuries is in danger of becoming a lost one, since the latter-day generations will not take up the occupation. What use, they argue, when a battered tomato can will hold food or drink quite as well as a basket, the shaping of which requires so many hours of patient labor. Then, too, the materials of which the fine baskets were made—the reeds and grasses that grow along the shores of streams on unbroken ground—with the "settling up" of the country, have been well-nigh rooted out of existence. The wild growths might be coaxed back to their native banks, but there is no such thing as coaxing the indolent young Indian of this New Woman era to emulate her grandam's housewifely accomplishments.

As the only feasible plan—that of having the Indian children in the Government schools taught to weave—has, I believe, been tried with very indifferent success, chances are that a few years hence good baskets will be as unattainable as the Koh-i-noor.

OLD KING COTTON.

HE IS STILL A GREAT BENEFACTOR OF TRADE.

A CROP WHICH OPENS NEW AVENUES OF EMPLOYMENT FOR A VAST HORDE OF MEN—THOSE WHO ARE AFFECTED BY IT.

The harvesting of a cotton crop of eight to nine million bales (the estimate for the season of 1896) sets into motion the machinery of a complicated industry that involves the interests of so many classes that it is difficult to grasp off-hand its importance to the country. Many people are inclined to think that the Southern farmer is the only one interested in the annual yield, but he is, after all, a small part of the great army of men dependent upon the cotton crop for a living. There are thousands of New-Yorkers who suffer or prosper according to the fluctuation of the great Southern product. By September 1 the cotton grower can begin to calculate upon his prospective profits. The picking season begins earlier than this in the warmer States of the South, but the danger from boll-worms and inclement weather is not over for most of the crop until later, and the grower must be a little cautious in "counting his chickens before they are hatched." During the early days of the harvesting season, however, a great army of buyers spread themselves throughout the whole cotton belt, and every little hamlet and village is visited by one or more of the trade. Every firm engaged in the cotton business has its agents in the field soliciting business, and the growers are often pestered by the representations of the buyers, anxious to secure their commissions. The agents are kept in constant communication with the firm, who instructs them by telegram as to the rates to offer for the cotton, and if they can make bargains lower than the ruling rates they receive so much more for their labor. The majority of the cotton growers send their products to one firm, whose past dealings have justified them in continuing to trust them; but it is the duty of every agent to induce as many farmers as possible to abandon old customers and take up with the new.

COMPETITION AMONG BUYERS.

Hence there is close competition among the buyers, and rich cotton districts will be alive with agents or rival cotton firms. A good agent will make a fair salary in buying cotton, but the majority will barely cover living expenses. In order to be of value to a cotton firm he must be up in the trade and understand thoroughly the various grades of cotton and its value when ready for shipment. When the cotton comes forth ready for market the buyer examines a part of it, and if he understands his work he can tell instantly its value to him. So well versed is the agent supposed to be that he can tell whether the cotton has been raised on "black land" or light soil. When a farmer finds himself surrounded by four or five anxious agents, all bidding for his few bales of cotton, he realizes to the full extent the importance of the farmer to the country, and he takes not a little quiet enjoyment out of the situation. But he realizes that the agents are there not in his interest, but in the interests of their firms, and he does not intend to let his farm product go until the highest figures have been named. It may be remarked incidentally that the average cotton grower is not the ignorant and benighted fellow that some would have people believe, and while he may not know exactly the condition of prices he has an approximate knowledge of the value of his cotton, and it would be hard to deceive him in driving a bargain.

There are several thousand buyers in the field all through the fall months, collecting and gathering the products of the small farms and sending them to their firms in some neighboring city. The pay these buyers receive is generally 25 cents per bale, or, if on salary, from $65 to several hundred dollars a month, according to their ability and the firms' standing. Most of the buyers on the field are employed by comparatively small firms in the centre of the cotton region, and they ship their goods either to New-York or to Liverpool. Firms in Galveston, Savannah, Charleston, New-Orleans and other cities make it their business to supply New-York firms with their season's purchases, while others deal directly with Liverpool buyers. They represent the collectors of the crop, gathering in the isolated bales from farms situated far apart, and then send them to the great distributing points. Their position is very responsible, for they buy and sell the cotton solely of their own free will, and not through orders from the distributing points.

WORK OF TRAMP STEAMERS.

As soon as the cotton picking is well under way a fleet of tramp steamers head for the Gulf and South Atlantic ports, and, as these steamers carry a bulk of the supply, the firms collecting the cotton from the farmers frequently avail themselves of the opportunity to ship it direct to Europe by the steamers. The tramp steamers have been growing bigger every year, and many of them are now large enough to carry 12,000 bales of cotton at once. Their captains are not engaged in cotton buying, but they take a load of cotton across the ocean cheaper than the regular liners. When the firms in the South Atlantic ports have loaded them down with the precious product of the fields they sail straight for Liverpool, where most of the consignments are made, and then return again for another load. It is during this season that the tramps and their crews have steady employment and full cargoes. The fleet of tramp steamers engaged in carrying cotton to Europe in the fall of the year is large, and in the present depression of business rapidly increasing. They are making heavy inroads into the business of the regular liners, as they cut prices and reduce the cost of transportation to the lowest possible figure. Savannah, Charleston, New-Orleans and all the coast city harbors are full of these European tramps at this season of the year, and their coming and going give an appearance of great activity to the harbor.

In addition to the army of original purchasers in the field and the firms employing them there are the captains and crews of the tramp steamers, the loaders and carters along the wharves, and the clerks and general employes required to keep track of the stuff, who are all benefited by the great crop. Before the cotton has reached this stage of its journey three times as many men as the farmers who have raised it get wages, salaries or commissions from the crop. In all of the coast cities there are thousands of men almost entirely sustained by the cotton crop for at least six months of the year. Wharves, warehouses and stock exchanges that have been dull and deserted for half a year suddenly become scenes of great activity.

New-York City is, after all, the great centring place for the cotton crop, and it moves toward this city from all parts of the South as steadily as iron filings are attracted to magnets. If it were not for the fleet of tramp steamers engaged in ocean cotton carrying nearly all of the annual crop would come to New-York, as in former years. Most of the cotton is brought here by the regular coasting steamers, and is then shipped immediately to Liverpool, New-England or elsewhere. New-York does not consume the product, but merely acts as the great distributing centre for the country and Europe. The cotton wharves of New-York are extensive affairs, and just as soon as the harvesting season opens a great army of men is set at work on them to handle the fleecy product of the South.

LOADING THE VESSELS.

In the Southern cities negroes load the vessels with the bales of cotton to the tune of old Southern melodies, but in New-York white 'longshoremen take their places, and it is rarely that a negro is found among them. The cotton 'longshoremen hang around in groups at the different street corners, and when a vessel is ready for unloading a shrill whistle calls them to their duty. Every man is a strong, strapping fellow, for the bales of cotton weigh 500 pounds and more. The 'longshoremen are not on salary, nor are they regularly engaged by the day or season, but most of them find steady work from certain firms the year round. They receive from 20 to 25 cents an hour, and they generally make more in a week in the cotton season than most freight handlers.

A great deal of the cotton consigned to New-York is sold before it reaches the city, and upon its arrival it is immediately transferred and shipped to some other part of the world. Some goes into storage to wait for customers, but most of it is quickly sent to the consumer. There is consequently a great deal of transferring from wharf to wharf, and in this work the truckmen and workmen on the lighters find employment. Another entirely new class of employes numbering thousands thus find that the cotton harvesting season brings them money and steady work for another season. The truckmen take the cotton that is transferred from one wharf to another near by, but the lighters are employed when the bales are sent any distance. The trucks generally carry about twelve to fifteen bales at once, while the lighters are capable of transferring in each load from 1,000 to 1,500 bales. The price is 15 cents a bale in either case, or, after the cost of loading and unloading is deducted, it amounts to 13 cents.

Some of the large cotton dealers have their own truckmen and lighters, and they reduce the cost to a smaller figure in this way. Other owners of lighters and trucks charter their plants to the large companies for the season, or a boss truckman owning a dozen trucks will make some contract with the companies to transfer their cotton at a fixed sum for the season. The amount of handling the cotton receives in New-York is great, and fully 20,000 men are employed in the various lines of the work. The regular cotton carrying ships have machinery for loading and unloading the heavy bales, and they save a great deal of labor. The heavy derricks pick the bales up from the ship's hold and swing them to the pier, where the trucks are ready to load and carry them away.

The staple product of the South could be followed further in its progress, showing how at each step it brings work to a new army of men, but enough has been said to make it clear that the cotton farmer is only a small part of the many affected by the crop. From New-York the bales go to the Liverpool or New-England factories, where they are woven into cloth. Here the employes are numbered by the hundreds of thousands. Incidentally, employment is given also to the men engaged in manufacturing jute bagging, iron hoops and farm implements and machinery. On the various exchanges there are hundreds of men who make their living in speculating in cotton, and they must be classed among the great numbers who are dependent wholly or in part upon the cotton yield for their bread and butter.

CONCERNING ELEPHANTS.

SOME ENTERTAINING DETAILS OF THEIR LIVES AND WAYS.

There were some interesting details concerning elephants in a conversation held in London the other day by a representative of "Black and White" with Mr. Cunnah, one of the directors of the London and Burmah Merchandise Company. The company had imported a troop of the great beasts, and they were rocking themselves to and fro in their open shed, being fed with cakes by children as the two men talked.

"Yes," said Mr. Cunnah, "that see-saw movement is odd. I believe it an exhibition of contentment. I know, though, that this habit nearly capsized the vessel wherein we brought two of them down the Irrawaddy. There was a good sea on as we approached Rangoon, and this appeared to please the elephants, for they began to see-saw so violently that the ship seemed likely to be thrown on her beam-ends."

"To what purposes are elephants put in India and in Burmah?"

"The native princes require them to enhance their pageantry. Europeans use them chiefly in piling timber, dragging ordnance and hunting the tiger. Do not suppose that in moving logs an elephant employs his trunk; he is far too chary of injuring that sensitive organ. In point of fact he uses his tusks, curling his trunk around the burden, which often weighs half a ton, to steady it. In turning over a heavy piece he invariably takes the cord attached to it between his teeth, and, passing the rope over one of his tusks, obtains the benefit of leverage. On the shores of all the big rivers bordered by teak forests he appears to be working in an intelligent manner, but in reality he is merely obeying the instructions of the mahout seated on his neck. The instructions are conveyed by the voice and the pressure of knees and feet. It is generally admitted that the elephant is not nearly so intelligent as the horse or dog. He has a small brain, though no animal excels him in obedience and gentleness. The former is exemplified in tiger hunting, and the latter is shown in the excitement and the scrimmage of hobbling wild elephants after capture in a kheddah, where the tame ones display great care in avoiding a dismounted native."

"These animals are of the Asiatic variety?"

"Yes; there are but two species, the African and the Asiatic, and both, according to the naturalist, belong to the same genus. Fossilized remains, however, show that once upon a time there were as many as fourteen species. It is curious that in Ceylon males and females alike are generally tuskless—indeed, not one in 300 has tusks—while in India quite 75 per cent of the males are thus adorned. The tusks are perceptible at birth, and when broken or injured they are never reproduced. Doubtless you have noticed that the two males here have brass curbs at the point of their tusks; these are designed to prevent splitting or other injury.

"Oh, yes; elephants have a wholesome fear of the tusks, and the one with the biggest in a herd is greatly respected by his fellows. He fights with them, curling the trunk carefully out of the way—when he attacks a tiger, for instance—and an elephant has been known to pitch a tiger full thirty feet. Sometimes an elephant is born with a single tusk; he is then called Gunêsh, and if the tusk be the right-hand one he is much reverenced by the natives. It is not true that the so-called white elephant is an object of worship in Siam or anywhere else. He is merely valued as a freak of nature, and kept by native princes on that account."

"The elephant seems to move at a fair pace," I remarked, as one, laden with visitors, passed us.

"Yes, he usually goes along at about five miles an hour, but when he likes he can get up a speed of quite fifteen miles an hour. You notice that his gait is a sort of shuffle; he cannot gallop, nor canter, nor jump, yet his agility in crossing rough, mountainous country is astonishing. In districts where his food consists of roots and the branches of trees his tusks are invaluable for digging, and he commonly uses one tusk in particular, which the natives call the elhadam, or the servant. In Ceylon his food is grass and herbage; and, since he does not require tusks to procure sustenance, these have disappeared in process of time. It is said that in the Far North the young elephant is found with quite a woolly hide."

"The weight of a pair of fine tusks must be enormous."

"You are right; they have been known to weigh as much as 200 pounds, but that is unusual, about seventy-four pounds being far more common. The length from the gum is some five feet, and the circumference at that point sixteen inches. To get an elephant's height you have but to pass the tape twice around his foot and you have his height at the shoulder. The height of the elephant has been greatly exaggerated. There is not an elephant which rises to ten feet; eight feet five inches is a fair height. The natives divide elephants into three classes: the Koomeriah, signifying royal or princely; the Murga, a lighter animal, with longer legs, good for fast travelling, and the Dwasala, the common kind generally found in herds."

"How are elephants taken alive?"

"Oh, in several ways. Pitfalls represent a cruel mode practised only by natives; many are thus hurt in falling one upon the other. Noosing, which is effected by driving tame elephants among the wild, the mahouts concealing themselves under cloths till they have an opportunity of slipping down and passing nooses around the legs, is a favorite method in some places. The Government adopts the kheddah principle. A large tract of country is surrounded with a palisade, having a funnel-shaped opening. Where a herd is espied a great commotion is produced by discharging guns, lighting fires and shouting; and the animals are gradually driven toward the entrance. Once the elephants are inside the kheddah, the aperture is closed, and men are stationed a hundred yards apart to frustrate any attempt to escape. The beasts are then hobbled and fastened by ropes to stout trees. It is marvellous how soon elephants are tamed. In a couple of months they become docile enough to be led away."

"What about an elephant's keep?"

"Working, he consumes as much as two hundredweight of green stuff and half a bushel of grain. The expense of his keep and his liability to disease in captivity are diminishing his use to a great extent. Still, in districts where logs have to be brought from inaccessible places, he is invaluable."

"How long does the elephant live?"

"Well, that is a disputed point. Some say eighty years, others go as far as a hundred and thirty. It is a curious fact that you never come across a dead elephant in the forests. It is said he betakes himself to some inaccessible spot to die. It follows that you never come on his skeleton—unless, of course, he has been wounded or accidentally hurt."

RUIN OF THE JARDIN DES PLANTES.

From The London Standard.

Lamentations are arising from the Jardin des Plantes, and if they are not heeded the decline and fall of the Zoological Gardens of Paris will soon become a matter of history. Valuable trees are dead, or are dying from lack of attention. The monkey houses are in a bad way; the cages kept for the wild beasts which happen still to be in the land of the living leave much to be desired, from the point of view both of comfort and security; and the animals generally are throughout the twelve months strict observers of a sort of Lenten diet. Five years ago the last survivor of the rhinoceros species went over to the majority, and the poor beast's place has not since been filled. Lately there was a scare because the solitary hippopotamus, aged forty-one, betrayed symptoms of a break-up. The prospect of the gardens being left without a single representative of that kind of animal proved too much for the worthy director, M. Milne Edwards, who, with great difficulty, contrived to scrape together 10,000 francs, with which he purchased a juvenile member of the tribe, which is now on its road to this metropolis. Lack of funds, it scarcely need be added, is at the bottom of this melancholy collapse. The allowance granted by Parliament has been cut down, and there is every likelihood of its being further curtailed. If, however, matters are suffered to go on much longer at this rate, the only alternative will be to shut up the show. Meanwhile it is certainly distressing to be compelled to exhibit so-called wild beasts in a condition of semi-starvation, with all the courage knocked out of them and not a roar left in them, consumptive monkeys, long innocent of the mischievous tricks so characteristic of the race, and birds of erstwhile gay plumage which have not the heart to warble.

"Why, are you a Socialist?"—(Truth.